

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 12, 2012

Agenda Item: Statewide Fisheries Management Plan

Division: Fish and Wildlife (Fisheries)

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

At the Feb. 16, 2012 FWP Commission meeting the Fisheries Bureau provided an overview on its interest in developing a statewide fisheries management plan. Fisheries staff explained that they would come back to the commission seeking an official endorsement of the planning process. The plan will identify FWP's overarching goals and direction for core fisheries programs, including fish management, aquatic habitat, fishing access and angling opportunities. At a watershed scale, the plan will establish the management direction for each waterbody under FWP authority, the management objectives for the fish found in the waterbody, and any special considerations or management issues that apply. The plan will also provide the public with an overview on the laws, rules and policies that affect fisheries management and the framework for decision-making and project priority setting. The plan will also provide guidance to FWP and the FWP Commission in the development of future policies and regulations. The goal is to propose a draft plan to the commission in the fall of 2012 and a final plan by the end of the year or early in 2013. The longevity of the plan is expected to be 10 years with a review after five years.

Public Involvement Process & Results

The public involvement process would include public meetings, press releases, a web page dedicated to the planning process, MEPA analysis, and an official comment period for the draft plan. Fisheries would seek input from the various groups, organizations and other entities with an interest in fisheries management, e.g. the Angler's Forum, sportsmen's groups, conservation groups, and the regional citizen advisory committees. The web page would provide regular updates, meeting information, draft material for review, and the ability for people to provide comments online. The public would also have an opportunity to speak to the commission on the issue during informational sessions or when staff proposes draft and final versions of the plan.

Alternatives and Analysis

FWP could continue without a statewide fish management plan. This alternative is not preferred. A statewide plan offers the public a better opportunity to affect, understand, and support the management direction and priorities for fisheries management.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

The statewide plan will help FWP to effectively manage Montana's fisheries and enhance public understanding and support for these efforts.

Proposed Motion

I move that that FWP Fisheries Bureau proceed with the planning process for a statewide fisheries management plan as proposed.